

A GOOD NIGHT SLEEP TIGHT STORYBOOK

THE TINDERBOX

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THE TINDERBOX



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Long ago, and far away a soldier was returning from the wars. He had been away for many years and was now very happy to be going home. He whistled as he walked, his knapsack bouncing on his back.



“Who’s this?” he wondered, as he looked along the path. He could see somebody standing by a stump of a tree. As he drew closer he saw it was the ugliest looking witch he had ever seen.

“Good morning, old woman,” he said politely, not wishing to annoy her.

“Good morning, good soldier,” replied the witch. “I can promise you all the gold you can carry, if you will do me a very small favour.”

“What’s that?” asked the soldier.

“If you climb down this hollow tree,” said the witch, pointing to the stump behind her. “You will find yourself in a passage. Behind the first door, there is a dog with eyes as large as teacups sitting on a chest filled with copper coins. Lift the dog onto my checked apron and take as much money as you like.”

The soldier was very interested. He had been poor for a very long time.

“In the second room, there is a dog with eyes as large as dinner plates,” continued the witch. “He sits on a chest of silver. Do the same to him. But in the third room, there is a dog with eyes as large as cartwheels. He sits on a chest of gold. Here, take my apron.” She gave the soldier the checked apron.

“But what do you want, old woman?” asked the soldier. “What is the small favour?”

“Only a little thing,” she said. “There’s an old tinderbox down there that my mother left behind. Mine is worn out, and I can’t climb down. That’s all.”

“Very well,” said the soldier. “I shall fetch your tinderbox.”



The soldier climbed down the tree and came to a long, dark passageway, just as the witch had said. He opened the first door, and there sat the dog with eyes as big as teacups.

"Goodness me," said the soldier. "You're a fine fellow." Doing as the witch had said, the soldier gingerly picked up the dog and sat him on the apron.

He then filled his pockets with copper coins. He continued to the second room. There sat the dog with eyes as big as dinner plates. The chest was full of silver coins.





The soldier immediately emptied his pockets of the copper coins and filled them with silver. The dog sat on the apron.

In the third room was the strangest of all dogs, with eyes like cartwheels. He sat on a chest of gold.

“Why have silver, when I can have gold?” asked the soldier, and he filled his pockets, knapsack, boots and even his hat with gold. He could hardly walk. The dog sat on the apron.

He returned to the stump and climbed up.

"Do you have my tinderbox?" asked the witch, as she helped the soldier out.

"I'm so sorry," said the soldier. "I completely forgot about it. I shall go back for it."

It was a very shabby looking tinderbox, and the soldier was puzzled. "Why does the witch want it so badly?" he wondered, and he asked the witch.

"Just give it to me," said the witch angrily.

"Tell me why," said the soldier. "If not, I shall kill you." And that's exactly what he did.





The soldier went into town, with the gold heavy in his pockets. He immediately rented fine rooms and bought new clothes. He enjoyed being rich, but he remembered to give some to the poor as well.

New friends helped him spend his money on the theatre and expensive restaurants. They told him about the princess.

“She is kept in a copper tower with no doors,” said one. “The King was told that she would marry a common soldier, so he keeps her hidden away.”



Eventually the day came when the soldier had spent all his money. His fine friends disappeared without a word. He had to move to a small tower room, as it was all he could afford. One day he had no money at all, not even enough for a candle.

He suddenly remembered the tinderbox. "There's sure to be a candle in there," he said.

He struck it once, and suddenly the dog with eyes as large as teacups was standing before him.

"What do you want, oh Master?" it asked.

"Money," said the soldier at once. "Bring me some money."

The dog disappeared, and returned in an instant with a bag of copper coins. The soldier soon realised that three strikes brought the dog with the gold chest. He moved back to his fine lodgings, and his friends all came back.



The soldier had thought a great deal about the princess in the copper tower and one night he called up the third dog.

"Bring me the princess from the copper tower," he said.

The dog returned within moments with the princess on his back.

The soldier couldn't stop himself. He kissed the princess.





The next morning, the princess told of a strange dream of a dog and a soldier.

This went on for several nights until the Queen told the princess' maid to keep watch.

The maid watched from a hiding place, and saw the strange looking dog come for the princess. She quickly followed them.



The maid saw the house the dog went into and marked the door with a cross.

But the dog was very clever and saw the cross on the door when it returned. It immediately put crosses on all the doors in the town.

"It's the house with the cross," said the maid, as the King and Queen arrived with a troop of soldiers.

"Here it is," said the King, running up to a door.

"No, here it is," said the Queen, going up to another.

They looked and saw all the houses were marked.

The Queen decided to try something else. She made a small bag and filled it with fine grain, and cut the corner off. She then tied it to the princess' belt.

That night the dog took the princess to the soldier as usual, but did not see the fine trail.

Guards followed the trail easily, and arrested the soldier the next morning.



The soldier was taken to prison. He would be executed the next morning. He could see the gallows being built outside his cell.

The whole town was excited at the thought of the execution, and it was like a holiday.

A little boy ran past the soldier's window, and lost his shoe.

As he stopped to pick it up, the soldier spoke to him.

"Would you do something for me?" he asked. "I've left my tinderbox at my lodgings. Will you fetch it for me? I'll pay you."





The boy was eager to earn a few pennies, and he ran off to the soldier's lodgings for the tinderbox.

The soldier was very pleased to be holding it again.



On the day of the execution, the soldier was taken to the gallows.

“Can I not make one last request?” he asked the King.

The King nodded reluctantly.



"I should like to smoke my pipe," said the soldier, and he took out his tinderbox. He struck it once, twice and three times, and the three huge dogs appeared before him.

"Save me from being executed!" cried the soldier.

The dogs dashed into the crowd, killing the guards and the judges, the executioner and then the King and Queen.

The people were terrified.

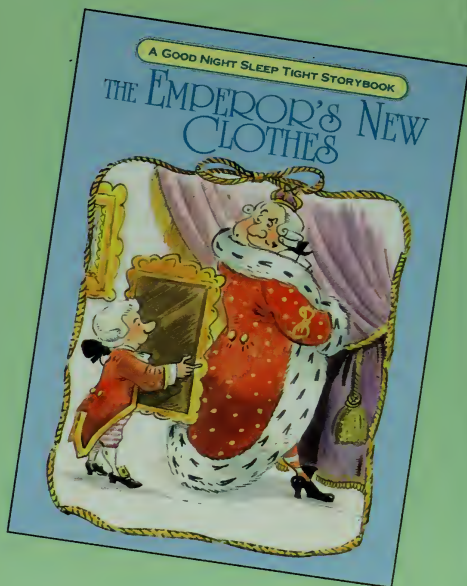
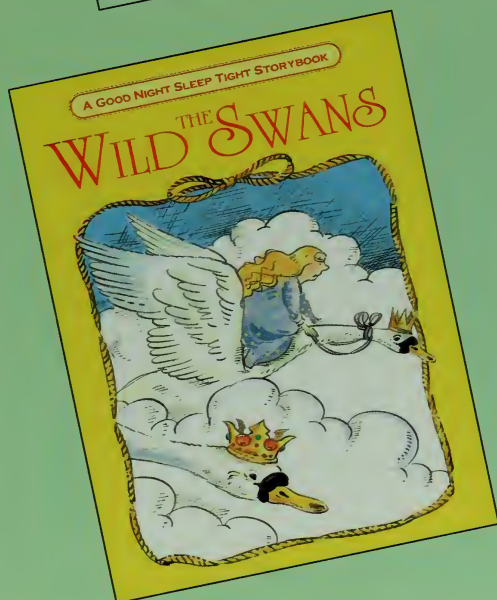
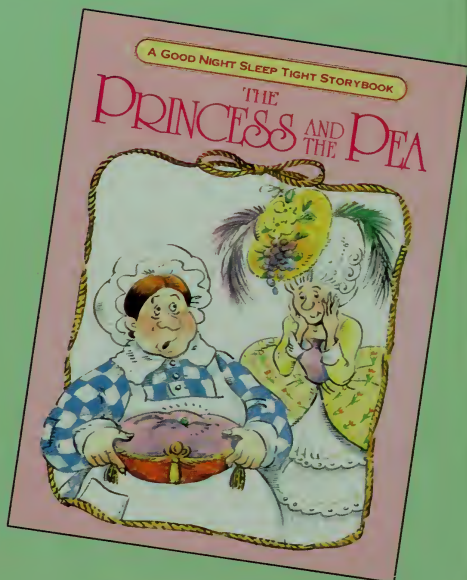
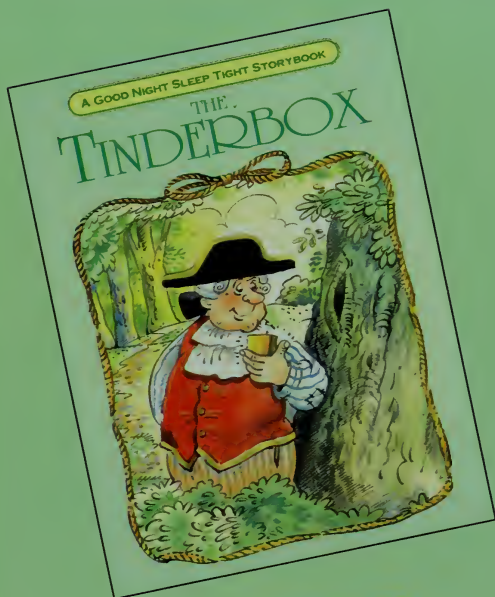
“Be our new King!” they cried to the soldier. And the soldier was pleased to become their King.





He married the princess, who was glad to leave the copper tower.

The dogs were guests of honour at the feast, and they were all eyes.



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